

## DURABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN PITESTI AND ARGES COUNTY

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***Abstract:** Durable development is one of the main concerns of the contemporary period. The complex relationship between tourism, development and natural environment is an example of the changes that have taken place in this field of tourism considered an important polluter of the natural environment. Tourism is the key element of durable development having an important impact on the economy, being considered a source of economic growth. Romania has to find its way through the differences given by the need of development, the regulations imposed by the EU and the concerns related to the next generations' future. Tourism is an important component of the tertiary sector, a consequence and interface branch of the national economy, and an industry without smoke that has an important contribution to the creation of the world gross product. An objective of the National Development Plan adopted in December 2005, component of the National Economy Development Strategy is the capitalization of the tourist and cultural potential and the growth of these fields' contribution to the regions' development, emphasizing the development of the infrastructure, diversifying and promoting the internal touristy offer, the increase of competitiveness*

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### 1. S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS OF THE TOURIST ACTIVITY IN PITESTI CITY

According to the Master Plan for National Tourism Development 2007 – 2026, tourism represents a means of accomplishing some strategic priorities. According to the plan, the development of a brand of national tourism will have a favorable impact on the foreign investments in Romania and on the balance of the current account.

The touristy activity is also part of the constant concerns of the local administration in Pitesti. Among the major actions undertaken in the last years that also aimed tourism we can count the Local Agenda 21, coordinated through the Program for Development of the United Nations (PDUN), and the National Center for Durable Development (NCDD) from Bucharest.

The Local Agenda 21 set as objective the drawing up of the strategy for applying the Local Plan of Pitesti Municipality for durable development.

From the evaluation of the business environment and of the economic activity the result was that tourism is weakly developed even though there are endowments with hotels, restaurants and recreation areas.

Starting from this state of fact it is mentioned within the strategy for durable development of the Municipality, as important objective, the development of tourism, assisting and encouraging the enterprisers in order to create modern tourism, as a complementary activity meant to lead to the sustained economic and social development of the area.

The strategic objectives for the development of tourism in Pitesti and in the surrounding areas are:

- capitalizing the opportunities specific to the area for cultural tourism, business, transit that overburden the favorable geographic area of the town;
- maintaining and promoting the cultural events and the national and international exhibitions in order to increase the events' tourism;
- developing some touristy programs in order to introduce the town, area and region in the national and international touristy circuit by capitalizing the local specific characteristics;
- improving and developing the communicational activity for tourism;
- involving the local economic agents in joint techniques of promoting the offer and the relational marketing;
- absorbing the economic agents in keeping the natural environment as the main element of the touristy offer;
- imposing some standards of superior quality for the offer and for the touristy services.

In order to establish the objectives in the touristy activity of Pitesti Municipality y started from the S.W.O.T. analysis to identify the opportunities of and the threats to the natural environment.

*Strong points:*

- developed general infrastructure;
- well-kept roads;
- preserving the traditions and the emergence of some events organized annually by Pitesti Municipality with full local, national and international participation;
- historical vestiges that recommend the city as an area with a rich historical background;
- human resources well represented in parks, and recreation areas;
- modern hotel units divided according to various classification categories;
- good geographical position that facilitates the formation of touristy circuits;
- getting closer to the valuable tourist areas that are to enter more actively the tourist circuit;
- the existence of a big number of small and medium economic agents who wish to carry out activities in crowded areas;
- intense economic activity that recommends the city as an area with important potential for the business environment;
- the existence of some solid relationships with various European cities and from other parts of the world as a result of Pitesti's fraternization with the Serbian city Kragujevac and the Italian city Caserto since the 70s, agreements renewed in 2000 with the Dutch city Tynaarlo since 1997, with the Swedish city Borlange since 2000, with Springfield, Ohio State, also since 2000. There have been contracts signed with Briansk city from the Russian Federation and Mohlyv Podilsky city from Ukraine and with communities from China, Angola, and Philippine;
- objectives for important investments for tourism are stipulated in the Municipality's budget for 2007, such as the rehabilitation and modernization of the Olympic Swimming Pool, an artificial skating ring in Strand park, the establishment of a leisure area for various events in the Municipality;
- the existence of some projects of almost 750,000 euros financed by the local budget and European funds for the protection of verdure spots, for respecting the statute of the existing protected areas and of the proposed ones, and for the functioning of the Zoo in Pitesti, according to the European standards;
- the existence of a portfolio of prior projects financed from the local budget and European funds for the reconstruction of the central area of the city, for the extension and modernization of the artificial beach in Tudor Vladimirescu neighborhood, the rehabilitation of Trivale Park, for the permanent organization of the already-established cultural events.

*Weak points:*

- the lack of collective and partnership initiative on the local and regional level;
- a weak communicational activity; the touristy information is done only at the level of travel agencies and of the other tourism operators;
- the lack of a collective concern for durable local and regional development and through tourism;
- the non-inclusion of tourism in Arges in the regional development strategy;
- there is not a culture of collective initiative caused by the maintenance of the state of citizen assisted by the state, by the administration.

*Opportunities:*

- the existence of a regional and national development policy 2007-2013 that supports the development of tourism;
- the existence within the Arges County Council as the first priority of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 “The improvement of economic competitiveness and the development of knowledge-based economy” and of the strategic objectives that support it and that are also stipulated in the objective “The improvement of the competitiveness of Romania tourism,” with a concrete reference to the accomplishment of the national development program for winter mountain tourism “Super-ski in the Carpathians;”
- actions carried out at county level for facilitating the access towards the areas with potential in economic and tourist development with the help of the PHARE program 2004-2006, actions for setting up information and tourist promotion centers on Dâmbovița and Arges Valleys that will lead to the development of tourism in those areas, a project accomplished together with Dâmbovița County Council and through which a touristy route is developed regarding the visit of historical capitals of Muntenia region (Târgoviște, Câmpulung and Curtea de Arges);
- the possibility to use European funds with the help of the post-adhesion programs;
- the informational system based on the use of modern information systems that play a fundamental role in informing and supporting the emergence of new motivations for the modern tourism consumption;
- a prosperous business environment that encourages business and reunion tourism;
- getting closer to the capital, to the infrastructure that facilitates the foreign tourists’ circulation in Arges area.

*Threats:*

- the rich touristy offer from the neighboring regions Rucăr-Bran, Valea Oltului, Brașov;
- the industrial pollution that could affect the quality of the natural environment;
- the integration requirements of the EU.

The application of a durable post-adhesion tourist development involves the joint action of the local tourist agents, of the public local and central administration, the establishment of public-private partnership in order to create a favorable environment for promotion and inclusion in the national and international tourist circuit to attract the local and foreign resources and investors.

## **2. STRATEGIC PROGRAMS IN TOURISM**

a) The establishment of an organizational structure as a committee or work group within local administration based on the public-private partnership. This organizational structure will generate certain capitalization actions of the tourist potential in the respective area, it will define the priorities, the objectives and it will organize the tourism-related activities in the city and region, it will identify the financing sources, it will efficiently administer the financial resources raised from the membership fees, publicity funds, it will efficiently administer the application of some rational

durable development policies by including the tourist resources into the national and international circuit. It will be made up of local public administration officials, tour-operators, transporters, local tourist associations or local branches of ANTREC, managers of reception units, PhD professors, representatives of a regional development agency;

**b)** The establishment of a tourist information office within the Public Relations Department of the City Hall with the purpose of disseminating tourist information materials, creating tourist information supports, such as: the tourist map of the city and of the county, brochures of the city's hotels and restaurants, a brochure with the main cultural-artistic and sports events organized annually by the City Hall, a guidebook with general information, a guidebook of the reception units, a calendar of the main events that should be distributed with the help of all the local tourism agents. Among the available financial resources there are: the bed fee that is charged from hotels according to the legislation in force since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003, the marketing and promotion group membership fee that can include all the local and regional tourism actors and that can pay a membership fee according to the number of inhabitants, as percent from the gross annual revenue or a fixed minimum fee;

Another important activity is the design and distribution of the City Catalogue that should include: a presentation of the city's tourist attractions and of the surroundings accompanied by photographs, their brief description, information and photographs of the accommodation units and restaurants, examples of tourist arrangements for half a day, a day, two days designed for types and categories of consumers, the events' calendar, folk festivals, arts and trades fairs, and other activities that could enrich the visitors' experience.

**c)** The creation of a brand and of a website destined to the tourism of the development area Touristy Pitesti that should include the online travels agenda, links to other partners' websites in tourism. With its help one can keep in touch with other economic agents that perform tourist services in the respective area, with professional associations in tourism, one can conduct analyses regarding the categories of clients.

**d)** The creation of a database with the categories of tourists or excursionists that have consumed tourism or that will be attracted in the tourist circuit. One should not omit the fact that the residents of Pitesti city can form a very important segment that can consume recreation services and, generally speaking, tourism services, to the extent to which they are provided with a rich offer presented in an aggressive form. This involves the design of some tourist arrangements that should include the tourist objectives of the surrounding areas, already established as areas of special tourist interest.

**e)** The development of new opportunities of spending free time by the citizens of Pitesti and Arges taking into consideration the recreation functions of the city makes that the verdure spots and open-air spaces become one of the most important elements that determine the functional-territorial structure of the city and its surroundings. The studies conducted lead to the conclusion that the inhabitants of the city have spent most of their free time during the week in the vicinity of the city. In order to make a division on areas of the recreation space two factors must be taken into account: the time destined for resting and the resting time. On the city level the sphere situated within ten minutes of walking (the area of general accessibility) has been clearly outlined, designed for the daily rest and areas of far-reaching accessibility, situated within a distance of 10-30 minutes of travelling by public means of transportation. A special problem is represented by the need of extending the recreation area by creating "artificial recreation spots" (artificial lakes, parks). Among these we can mention:

- building an amusement park of the AQUA-LAND type in the area of the artificial beach from Tudor Vladimirescu;

- reconstructing the Summer Theatre from Strand Park and organizing traditional cultural events, fairs, shows and concerts in the open and building a location for the capitalization of the local creations;
- the modernization of Strand Park, the creation of a clean lake by obeying the natural environment legislation in force, the building of an attractive recreation area and the modernization of a playground, the organization of cultural and sports activities;
- the modernization of the recreation area of Trivale Park, rebuilding and turning the lake in the Grota area into an environment-friendly area, as well as the modernization of the front parts of the bridge in the same area, the building of a playground in the park;
- the continuation of the modernization activity of the artificial beach in Tudor Vladimirescu by decorating the banks of the Arges river, and by replacing the recreation boats;
- creating a children's camp near Trivale Park that could be also used by the pupils in Ptești during the academic year with the purpose of carrying out different cultural-educational activities.

Thanks to its characteristics, the Municipality of Pitesti has high capacities to develop tourism on three main axes: business tourism, historical/cultural tourism and transit tourism. This happens due to the geographical positioning that offers access to important national and European arterial highways, due to the city's historical characteristics and to the development of the economic, cultural and university sector.

In 2009 within the Arges tourism Strategy in the next 20 years there was made the Plan Master for tourist development of mountain places of Arges County with the help of some advisers from Alsace-Lorraine region from France, a place with a premountain and mountain relief similar with the Arges relief. These ones, for a year, together with specialists from Arges County Council and the Implementation of Develop Projects Agency of Arges County had inventoried about 160.000 hectares, and that means the mountain territory of its tourist development is wanted for the next 20 years.

In its general data, synthetically, the geographic situation of Arges county means: 6826 kmp, 576 communes, 95 villages, and a watercourse that borrowed the name or administrative territory, with a flow of 1,671 billion mc/year.

The major advantages for sustainable tourist development of mountain area are:

- altitude lakes;
- important reservations;
- caves;
- Fagaras, Iezer, Piatra-Craiului, Leaota Mountains;
- diversity of wildlife and flora;
- rural landscapes;
- fruit trees cultivations (apple, plum orchards etc.);
- protected areas (natural reservations and parks);
- sub-Carpathian areas with traditional agriculture.

Master Plan includes the aims that should be developed for the tourist activity:

- real estate investments for the extension of winter season; the ski slopes will be arranged like this: with green track –deb level, with blue track – average level, with red track – good level, black track – very good level; competition tracks;
- for Vidraru, Râusor, Pecineagu and Baciú mountain lakes there are identified the next develop possibilities: nautical bases and creating small attachment-ports or nautical halt, using the specialized staff and renting the nautical material ships equipped only with electric engines, small organized cruises, necessary decorations for rowing, nautical sports in the fast mountain waters;

- it is suggested possible investments in: Vlad Tepes castle (Poienari), Oratea castle (Dambovita Bridge), Vidraru lake, by generating a multi-modal approach of this tourist potential.
- the development of Iezer and Leaota Mountains areas.

The development of the intercommunity area in Pitesti and Arges county represents an immense opportunity to improve the collaboration capacity between the local public administration and the civil society, with a direct impact on the process of transparency of the decision-making act and of increasing the citizen's degree of involvement in solving the community's problems with the purpose of including Pitesti in the category of modern European cities.

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